

**MINUTES**  
**PLAN COMMISSION**  
**City Hall Forum - 100 State Street, Beloit, WI 53511**  
**7:00 PM**  
**Wednesday, February 26, 2025**

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chairperson Ramsden called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Commissioners Ramsden, Winkelmann, Anderson, Abarca, and Flesch were present. Commissioners Jacobson and Elliott and Councilor Day were absent.

**2. MINUTES**

**2.a. Consideration of the minutes of the February 19, 2025 Plan Commission meeting**

Commissioner Winkelman made a motion to approve the Minutes, seconded by Commissioner Anderson. Motion prevailed, voice vote (5-0).

**3. PUBLIC HEARING**

There were no public hearings held.

**4. REPORTS**

**4.a. Consideration of Resolution 2025-08 approving the Written Decision for Exceptions to the Outdoor Sign Regulations for the property located at 2825 Prairie Avenue**

Community Development Director Julie Christensen provided an overview of the staff report and explained that the action required by Commission would be to consider the exception requests and complete the Written Decision. Each exception is listed separately, and you will need to meet all three of the standards for each exception. Ms. Christensen also mentioned that there was a letter received from Tim Feeley, Beloit Health System's attorney outlining their concerns with the exceptions proposed.

Chairperson Ramsden began the discussion by explaining how he felt the exceptions met standards 1 and 3. He based his reasoning on the data and analysis provided in the sign study. He explained that he believes that health needs should be prioritized over the aesthetic interests of the Sign Ordinance.

Vice-Chairperson Anderson indicated how he felt the exceptions met the standards in the Sign Ordinance. His support for the exceptions was based on the data put forth by the sign experts. Mr. Anderson explained that he believes the public interest is served by allowing these signs. He also didn't believe the exception was self-created, as it was an expansion of a facility already located in the City.

Commissioner Winkelmann indicated that he didn't disagree with the thoughts expressed by the Chairperson Ramsden and Vice-Chairperson Anderson; however, he has a few questions for staff.

Commissioner Winkelmann asked if only one standard had to be met or if all three had to be met. Ms. Christensen answered that all three standards must be met in order to approve an exception. Commissioner Winkelmann then asked if there must be evidence in the public record. Ms. Christensen indicated that that was correct. He indicated that he was having a difficult time thinking about the evidence in the public record addressing all of these issues. He indicated that the Commission has two sign ordinance exception requests coming from Beloit Health System in a few weeks and suggested delaying action until that meeting.

Ms. Christensen explained that Mercyhealth's attorney did draft something for the Commission, which was included in the last agenda packet. Ms. Christensen brought the letter up on the monitors for the Commission to read.

Chairperson Ramsden suggested that staff formally write down the Commission's arguments for each standard for each exception. For the first exception and standard #1, it is reasonable to grant the exception based upon the study presented by the applicant indicating that the sizes allowed by ordinance would be insufficient in providing potential emergency patients the best possible health care outcomes when attempting to locate an emergency room. Not granting the exception would unreasonably restrict an on-premises sign owner from advertising his business. This is based on the data put forth by the sign expert.

For the first exception and standard #2, the hardship is not self-created. Then add the language provided by Attorney Lindau in the letter submitted with Mercyhealth's application. Therefore, the language is the hardship is not self-created. The Emergency Center is on a road already populated with many large non-conforming signs, making compliance with the current sign ordinance impractical and problematic. Unfortunately, there are numerous signs in the immediately surrounding area that pre-date the sign ordinance and, as a result, are much larger than what the current ordinance provides. These commercial operations are not providing life-saving services where every second matters. Further, the proposed signs are essential to differentiate the property from BHS to prevent confusion and to ensure that patients arrive at the current location for the care they need. Chairperson Ramsden added it is an expansion and natural evolution of an existing business.

For the first exception and standard #3, the exception will not undermine the purpose of the sign ordinance or the public interest. Failing to grant the exception would undermine the public interest where citizens need to quickly and easily locate an emergency room to serve their health needs. Health needs should be prioritized over aesthetic interests when arguing for smaller signs which is the purpose of the sign ordinance.

Chairperson Ramsden asked that these three explanations should apply to the three standards for the other three exceptions as well.

Motion was made by Vice-Chairperson seconded by Commissioner Abarca to approve Resolution 2025-08 approving the written decision for exceptions to the outdoor sign regulations for the property located at 2825 Prairie Avenue as previously outlined by the Commission.

Commissioner Winkelmann raised the issue of the condition approved as part of the approval at the last meeting, that the signs shall be brought into compliance within six months of the date the emergency medical services cease. He suggested adding the condition to this approval. Ms. Christensen added the condition from approval at the February 19, 2025 meeting to Resolution 2025-08. Commissioner Flesch added some clarifying language.

Chairperson Ramsden re-stated the motion and asked for a roll call vote. The motion passed with a vote of 4-1, with Commissioner Flesch abstaining.

**5. STATUS REPORT ON PRIOR PLAN COMMISSION ITEMS**

There was report.

**6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Community Development Director Julie Christensen provided a summary of the items scheduled for the March 19, 2025 Plan Commission meeting.

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Vice-Chairperson Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Winkelmann to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried (5-0). Meeting was adjourned at 6:35 PM.

  
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Brian Anderson, Vice-Chairperson